

Message Text

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PAGE 01 BEIRUT 01357 121154Z

21

ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02

INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

NSCE-00 SSO-00 USIE-00 INRE-00 OMB-01 AID-05 SAB-01

SAM-01 /071 W

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O 121035Z FEB 76

FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8575

INFO AMEMBASSY ATHENS IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY AMMAN IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY CAIRO IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY JIDDA IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV IMMEDIATE

USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GERMANY IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIRUT 1357

DELIVER TO NEA/ARN/DRAPER AT OPENING OF BUSINESS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS, PINT, LE

SUBJECT: 0900 LEBANON REPORT

1. CONTRARY TO INTERPRETATION OF PREMIER KARAME'S
REMARKS BY PRESS SERVICES FOLLOWING CABINET MEETING
YESTERDAY, IT IS NOT AT ALL CLEAR THAT ANY FINAL
DECISION HAS BEEN TAKEN AS TO WHETHER OR NOT MARONITE
RIGHT TO THE PRESIDENCY WILL BE IN WRITING. THIS
APPARENTLY WAS DISCUSSED AT LENGTH, LEADING TO
KARAME'S SOMEWHAT AMBIGUOUS STATEMENT TO THE EFFECT
THAT THE RIGHT IS RECOGNIZED IN CUSTOM AND THEREFORE
NEED NOT BE RECOGNIZED IN WRITING. PRESS HAS BEEN
GETTING CONTRARY STORY FROM PEOPLE AROUND PRESIDENT
FRANGIE, AND THERE IS SPECULATION THAT SYRIANS CONTINUE
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TO INSIST ON WRITTEN GUARANTEE AS PART OF THE DEAL WHICH

GIVES MOSLEMS SO MANY NEW ADVANTAGES. SOME DOUBT IS ALSO CAST ON EXACT TIME POLITICAL AGREEMENT WILL BE ANNOUNCED BY FRANGIE, DESPITE KARAME'S DECLARATION THIS WOULD BE IN COURSE OF OR FOLLOWING SPECIAL CABINET MEETING TO BE HELD SATURDAY, FEB. 14.

2. BEKAA, PARTICULARLY REGION AROUND ZAHLE, WAS SCENE OF RENEWED TENSION YESTERDAY FOLLOWING DISCOVERY OF CHRISTIAN WHO HAD BEEN TORTURED AND KILLED. HIS FELLOW VILLAGERS PROMPTLY STOPPED TWO MSOELM PASSER-BY AND KILLED THEM. WHILE THAT INCIDENT WAS FINALLY STOPPED, THERE ARE OTHER REPORTS OF KIDNAPPINGS AND COUNTER-KIDNAPPINGS INVOLVING LEBANESE ARMY AND DISSIDENT GROUP FOLLOWING LT. KHATIB IN THE SOUTH (MARYOUN). THERE WERE SOME INCIDENTS IN BEIRUT, POINTING UP CONTINUED INSECURITY IN THE CITY PARTICULARLY AT NIGHT. MEANWHILE, REGIONAL MILITARY COMMITTEE FOR BEIRUT AND MT. LEBANON HAS PREPARED A DRAFT LAW SETTING PENALTIES FOR KIDNAPPERS WHICH WOULD BE SUBMITTED TO THE GOVERNMENT FOR APPROVAL BY THE CHAMBER OF DEPUTIES. REPORTEDLY HOLDING A PERSON FOR 24 HOURS WOULD BE PUNISHABLE BY 7 YEARS AT HARD LABOR, BEYOND 24 HOURS BY LIFE IMPRISONMENT. THIS AT LEAST INDICATES EFFORTS TO UNDERLINE SERIOUSNESS OF THE SITUATION.

3. CABINET DISCUSSED NUMBER OF ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL QUESTIONS. FOLLOWING MEETING MINISTER TUEINI TOLD THE PRESS IN RESPONSE TO A QUESTION THAT THE STATE PLANNED TO EXPROPRIATE KARANTINA LAND (PRESENTLY OWNED BY MARONITE CHURCH) PARTLY TO ENLARGE PORT AREA AND PARTLY TO BUILD CHEAP HOUSING.

4. UNHCR REPRESENTATIVES CALLED AT EMBASSY AGAIN YESTERDAY TO DISCUSS GENERAL SITUATION AS WELL AS PLANS FOR MOVEMENT OF ASSYRIAN-ARMENIAN REFUGEES FROM IRAQ. THEY HAVE MENTIONED HIGHER ESTIMATE OF NUMBER OF PEOPLE WHO ARE HOMELESS THAN WE HAVE HEARD FROM ANY OTHER SOURCE TO DATE. THEY WERE USING BALL PARK FIGURE OF 40,000 TO 50,000 LIVING QUARTERS MADE UNLIVABLE AND SOME 200,000 PEOPLE
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THUS MADE HOMELESS, AND HALF A MILLION PEOPLE IN NEED OF SOME KIND OF IMMEDIATE ASSISTANCE. WFP REP PUT TOTAL NEEDY AT 350,000. SEPTELS COMING.
LAMBRAKIS

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